

# The Athenian Mercury :

Tuesday October 24. 1693.

*This with all the Seven following Questions  
from the Poetical Lady.*

Quest. 1. **W**ether a thing Indifferent in it self, as the Eating of Blood, if persisted in with a Doubting Conscience, be damning?

*Answ.* The ground of this Question we suppose is that of the Apostle, "He that *doubteth* is *Damned* if he *Eat* — to which We say, *First*, That what we render *Damned* there, has by good *Commentators* been thought to signify no more than *Condemned*, *Self-condemn'd* or *Judged* by his own *mistaken Conscience*: However the *Distractions* of such a *Conscience*, in a thing of no greater moment, and left *indifferent* by *Authority*, do, We think, *Oblige* to *act* or *forbear* according to their *Direction* — the consequence whereof is, that the refusing to follow such *Direction* is a *Sin*, and every *Sin* is by *Protestants* accounted in its own *Nature*, *damning*, and will be *actually* so without *Repentance*: Tho' in the mean time, those who *scruple* any such *indifferent Action* ought to get their *Consciences* better *inform'd*, and to consider the *Nature* of an *indifferent* thing, which is no other, as the Word it self *Confesses*, than such as a Person is left *indifferent* as to the *doing* of it, or *letting* it *alone*, neither of 'em being a *Sin* — the *Consideration* of which is sufficient to *satisfie* any who don't *wilfully close* their *Eyes* against *common Sense* and *Reason*.

Quest. 2. *In the Ladies Question about Patches, she said she wou'd leave 'em off when she came in those places where they wou'd give Offence: You told her in your Answer, 'twas more than she was bound to do; Now my Query is, Whether that in the 14th. Rom. 13. don't Oblige her to it?*

*Answ.* We are still of the same Mind, and think she is not *Oblig'd* either by that or any other place of *Scripture* to abridge her own *just Liberty*, only to prevent a weak *Perlons* *taking Offence* at it: Our Reason is, Because the *Offence*, or *scandalizing* our *Brethren*, mention'd by this *Apostle* and by our *Saviour*, is quite *different* from the *Offence* mention'd in the Question: That *Offence* was a proper *Greek Scandal* or *Stumbling-block*, which is defin'd by *St. Paul* himself ( in the place already cited ) an *Occasion* to fall, v. 13. and that such as wou'd *Destroy our Brother*, v. 15, & 20. whence 'tis plain that it must be *Causing* our *Brother* to *Sin* by our *means* that is here spoken against, which the *Christian* then might do in two Instances: First, Towards the *Jews*, by keeping them from *Christianity* in *judging* or *reviling* 'em for their *Ceremonial Nicetys*, concerning *Meats* and *Drinks*. Secondly, Towards the *Heathens*, in *eating Meat* *sacrific'd* to *Idols*, which harden'd the *Gentiles* in their *Idolatry*, and might give *Occasion* to weak *Christians* wholly to *Apostatize* from the *Faith*; but sure neither of these Effects, nor any thing like 'em, can come from *Wearing Patches*, nor can we suppose others shou'd *Wear* 'em against their *Consciences* from any such Example, which is the only proper *Scandal* We can possibly conceive shou'd be taken at them, this being so far from being likely, that there's more *fear* of their *Uncharitable Anger* and *Displeasure* than *finfull Imitation*. That therefore that's requir'd on both sides in the present Case, is, that we *Judge not one another*, as the *Apostle* expressly tells us, for, as he says afterwards, "The *Kingdom of God* is not *Meats* and " *Drinks* ( nor *Cloaths*, nor *Ornaments* ) but *Righteousness* " and *Peace*, and *Joy in the Holy Ghost*.

Quest. 3. *I was once Reprov'd by a Minister for Wearing of Pearl, to Convince me, he told me 'twas plainly forbidden*

*in the 1st. of Timothy 2. 9. where the Christian Women are Order'd not to wear it: I have since seen Dr. Hammond's and Mr. Pool's Annotations on the place, but yet remain unsatisfied, and therefore desire your Judgment thereon?*

*Answ.* 'Tis not likely that We shou'd *satisfie* your *Doubt*, if such as you have Nam'd already have fail'd of doing it — which yet We think in it self very *easy* to be done. In Order to which We shall first *Oblieve*, that this *Direction* relates *especially* to *Religious Assemblies*, at which *Christian Women* are not *present* themselves, so as to *ensnare* the *Eyes* of the *Beholders* with their *Beauty* and *Gaiety*; but, as well as the *Men* in the 8th. v. to *lift up Holy Hands* without *Wrath* and *Doubting*. Then further, Dr. *Hammond* says in his *Paraphrase*, "That *Women* are here required to come to " the *Assemblies* and *Pray* in such an *Attire* as is *decent*, " accounting *Modesty* and *Sobriety* the *greatest* ( he does " not say the *only* ) *Ornament*, and not *setting* themselves " *out vainly*, and with *Ostentation*, in *Curious Dressings*, &c. thus far he; and indeed 'tis plain, that the meaning of the *Apostle* is no more than that they ought rather to *delight* in the *Ornaments* of *Good Works*, and of a *meek* and *quiet Spirit*, than in *Pearls* and *Jewels*. That this is the *genuine Sense* of the *Words*, will ( We think ) be plain from these following *Considerations*. *First*, That 'tis very common in the *Holy Scriptures* to put a *Negative* instead of a *Comparative*, see *Gen. 5. 8.* and twenty other Instances; take one that's very plain, in *Prov. 8. 10.* *Receive my Instruction and not Silver*: Is not here *express Text* for the *Mendicant Fryars*, that must not *touch a Groat*, ( unless you put it into their *Sleeve* ) and wou'd not this soon put an end to *Trade*, or reduce all to the *Primitive way of Barter*, if we shou'd deny *Meanings*, as some foolish *Enthusiasts* have done? But it appears both from *Common Sense* and the other part of the *Verse*, that ( as has been said ) a *Negative* is put for a *Comparative*; for it follows, *and Knowledge* *fatter* than *Choice Gold*. *Agen*, in the *Controverted Text*, *Wearing Gold* and all *Costly Array* is mentioned as well as well as *Pearl*; but We know the *Holy Women* of Old were sometimes *adorn'd* with *Gold*, as particularly the *History of Rebecca* shows us, and that in so odd a manner as *Note-Jewels*, &c. to and nothing of the *King's Daughters Dress*, who might be all *glorious within*, and yet her *Cloathing* too be of *wrought Gold*; Nor to insist on the *Practice* of our own and most other Nations, to *Marry* and *Seal* with *Rings*, usually of the same *Metal*. But our last Argument, if there's need of more, that the present place is to be understood in the *Sense* wherein We have explain'd it, shall be taken from the *Comparison* of another *Scripture* with it, which is very like it, and which must necessarily be taken in this *Comparative Sense*; 'tis the 1st. of *St. Pet. 3. 3.* where the *Apostle* tells the *Wives* — that their *Adorning* shou'd not be that *outward Adorning* of *Plaiting the Hair*, and *wearing of Gold*, or of *putting on of Apparel*, but the *hidden Man of the Heart*, &c. Now here's a very full *Text* for the *Adamites*, in the *Sense* of that *Minister, Madam*, who is so angry at your *Pearl-Necklace*, all *putting on of Apparel* being therein as it seems expressly and directly forbidden, and accordingly not only *Naked Breasts* wou'd be *lawfull*, nay a *Duty*, but even *Primitive Simplicity* all over. But this being an *absurd* and *ridiculous Sense*, We must therefore enquire for another, which can be only that We have given, and which ought to be admitted in *St. Paul* as well as *St. Peter*, and the former *Scripture* as well as this.

Quest. 4. *What Books of Poetry wou'd you Advise one that's Young, and extreamly delights in it, to read, both Divine and other?*

*Answ.*

*Ans.* For Divine, David's Psalms, Sandys's and Woodford's Versions, Lloyd's Canticles, Cowley's Davideis, Sir J. Davis's *Nosce Teipsum*, Herbert's and Crashaw's Poems, Milton's Paradieses, and (if you have Patience) Wesley's Life of Christ. For others, Old Merry Chaucer, Gawen Douglas's Æneads (if you can get it) the best Version that ever was, or We believe ever will be, of that incomparable Poem; Spenser's Fairy Queen, &c. Tasso's Godfrey of Bulloign, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben. Johnson, Randal, Cleveland, Dr. Donne, Gondibert, WALLER, all DRYDEN, Tate, Oldham, Fleetman, *The Plain Dealer* — and when you have done of these, We'll promise to provide you more.

Quest. 5. Whether it's not a Crime to be True to one that's False to his Honour, his King and his Country?

*Ans.* There's another Question to be askt, Madam, before We can Resolve yours: Of what Nature are the Obligations of Truth and Faith between the Persons concern'd? if *Murimorial*, nothing Dissolves 'em by our Law, and We think by the Law of God too, but *Adultery or Death*. If the Obligations lye between single Persons, and are only those of Love and Friendship, they are no longer in force towards one who so little deserves 'em. No, tho' 'twere your own *Orestes*; and We are almost confident that one who is Mistress of so fine a Soul, has also Strength enough to lay the greatest Violence on her Inclinations, and whatsoever it costs her, shake off a Friendship for one who has no Faith, nor Loyalty, nor Honour; and We heartily Wish that all others who love King William, wou'd follow so glorious an Example, letting those *Jews* who are so Cursed as to hate him, still *Match* in their own *Tribe*, that they may not taint any honest English Blood, by mingling with it.

Quest. 6. Supposing any Liberty a Person has taken in their Discourse or Behaviour shou'd have such an Influence on a Mind less fortified as to plunge 'em into Vices from which they cou'd never be recall'd, and which otherwise they had probably been never guilty of: Query, Whether such a Person is not bound to make 'em Restitution as far as they can by a stricter Example and Friendly Advice, and to let 'em know the Pleasure and Serenity inseparable from Virtue and Innocence? and supposing them for ever depriv'd of an Opportunity of doing so, Whether their Repentance without it will be available before God?

*Ans.* There's first of all a great deal of difference between Imprudent and Criminal Liberties in Discourse and Conversation; both of these indeed may have ill Consequences, and therefore both to be Avoided and Repented of, tho' in a far different Degree; and no way can be more Effectual to repair such an Error than that Propos'd in the Question — But if that shou'd prove Ineffectual, if yet the Person who has been the Unhappy Occasion of another's Ruine, do all that lies in their Power to retrieve 'em from Vice and Destruction, no more certainly will be requir'd of 'em, except a Hearty Sorrow for what they now find 'tis too late to amend.

Quest. 7. What's your Opinion of the Book called *Melius Inquirendum*?

*Ans.* You need not make any great Question what our Judgment is concerning it, since it may be guess at as plainly by the whole Drift of our Writing, as if We had *Windows in our Breasts for you to read it*. There's none We suppose who has seen it, but must own the Book has a good share of Wit in't, tho' to be sure We think it not so well stored with Reason: The Author seems to us rather to argue Subtly, or if you please, Fallaciously, than Closely, and besides Advances little or nothing on the Subject, but what has been often before Objected and Answer'd.

Quest. 8. Who was — but stay, you can't Conjure, and therefore I was as good e're let that Query alone.

*Ans.* And least We shou'd be taken for Conjurers, We'll for the self-same Reason let alone the answering it.

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